

KEY ISSUES
OCTOBER 9, 2003

Introduction: The information contained herein is a summary of the information contained in the staff report to the Board of Supervisors dated 10/09/03. It has been organized into nine issue areas to assist the Board in providing policy direction.

ISSUE #1 - GENERAL STANDARDS FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE AMENDMENTS TO THE GENERAL PLAN -

Part III of the General Plan discusses the timing, circumstances and standards for consideration of future General Plan amendments. The General Plan indicates that the most appropriate location for additional growth, and the area that will be considered first by the County, is the "Future Study Area" in southwest Placer County. It goes on to state that the County will not consider GPAs in the Future Study Area until the West Placer Specific Plan, now known as Placer Vineyards, has been adopted by the County. The General Plan goes on to state that prior to the consideration of such GPAs it has been demonstrated that there is a market demand for additional urban or suburban development. As demonstrated by the holding capacity information referenced, the Cities' and County's General Plans currently designate sufficient land to accommodate projected growth through at least the year 2040.

Another question raised in the General Plan relates primarily to infrastructure and design issues and is addressed under ISSUE #4.

The Placer Vineyards Specific Plan is likely to be before the Board next year and therefore the timing of considering new growth areas related to the timing of the action on that Specific Plan is not an issue.

Question #1 - In light of the policies expressed in Part III of the General Plan how should the County process the proposed General Plan Amendments?

Alt. 1 - Any review should recognize the need to direct development to existing designated developable land and not encourage growth beyond the current capacity or,

Alt. 2 - The projects as proposed could provide alternative areas to accommodate growth and may provide an important amenity (the universities) that will provide substantial benefit to the County in the future or,

Alt. 3 - Because of the value and future benefit to the County's residents from the university proposals, these projects should be encouraged, but should not include the proposed off-campus residential and commercial development the demand for which can be met in other areas of the county or incorporated cities.

Question # 2 - The Placer Ranch project is not located within the "Future Study Area" (see Exhibit 1.f.) The De La Salle project is proposed entirely within the "Future Study Area." Should the County evaluate the projects differently because of this?

Alt. 1 - Yes, the Placer Ranch project is located outside of the subject area that was identified in the General Plan as the area to be considered first or,

Alt. 2 - No, the boundaries of the "Future Study Area" are not so precise as to preclude consideration of the Placer Ranch project at this time just because it is not within that area.

ISSUE #2 - PLACER PARKWAY ROUTE ALIGNMENT

The selection of a route for Placer Parkway is underway with an expected date of route adoption in 2007. It would be preferable to wait until the highway alignment is established before approving land development projects along the corridor. This is because the goal of the route alignment process is to find the route that results in the least environmental damage while meeting the project objectives. This process is best done on a regional scale and with a minimum of constraints.

The proponents of the projects (West Roseville Specific Plan, Placer Ranch and De La Salle University) have advocated for a process where their projects are considered prior to route adoption. The best highway alignment from an environmental standpoint could conflict with any of these land development projects. The optimal alignment, if the projects are to proceed, can be achieved through the completion of environmental studies in conjunction with the review of the land development projects. In the case of Placer Ranch, the Parkway alignment must pass through the project and therefore the challenge is to find the best highway alignment from an environmental standpoint and then plan the land development around it. In the case of De La Salle University, the question is whether the best highway alignment passes through the proposed site.

The Federal Agencies follow a process that places top priority on environmental constraints and therefore a highway alignment that avoids a newly approved project, at the expense of the environment, would face obstacles and could impact the receipt of federal funding for the Placer Parkway project.

Question # 3 - Should these land development proposals be delayed until the Placer Parkway alignment is established?

Alt. 1 - Yes or,

Alt. 2 - No, the County recognizes the risk but will work to reconcile the Parkway alignment issues during the environmental process for the projects.

ISSUE # 3 - "ORDERLY" DEVELOPMENT - The General Plan includes numerous policies that encourage urban growth to be directed to the cities or to existing community plan areas, and to support logical growth patterns.

Both proposals appear to contradict the above-mentioned General Plan policies. Both proposals would be located outside of nearby cities and are not contiguous to existing urban areas. A portion of the Placer Ranch site is within the Roseville Sphere of Influence and the De La Salle site is located outside of Roseville's Sphere. Annexations to Roseville are not proposed, although the City has indicated they may be interested in annexing these project sites. The extension of sewer services outside of city spheres of influence and community plan areas would be required.

Question # 4 - Given the existing General Plan policies related to directing major new growth to the cities, should the County consider the proposed General Plan amendments or indicate that the projects are timely only if and when the City of Roseville considers annexation?

Alt. 1 - Although the universities may be unique enough to be considered in the unincorporated area, the associated development belongs within the cities or,

Alt. 2 - The Placer Ranch proposal is immediately adjacent to existing development in the City of Roseville and is at least partially within the City's Sphere of Influence, therefore development of non-industrial uses should occur only if annexed to the City or,

Alt. 3 -The desirable public benefits of these university campuses, including surrounding commercial and residential development, that has been characterized as necessary to support the cost of developing the university campuses, is such that the Board is willing to consider revising general plan policies related to the location of urban growth in the County.

ISSUE #4 - AVAILABILITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Part III of the General Plan as well as other General Plan language include policies aimed at insuring that adequate infrastructure is provided for all new development.

"9. New development areas shall be designed and constructed to provide..... adequate surface water supplies; sewage collection, treatment, and disposal facilities; public utilities; police and fire protection and emergency services, school and medical facilities where warranted by population; and public transportation. Extensions of new infrastructure, including water, sewer, roads, etc. should be compatible with existing incorporated Cities' General Plans."

Wastewater treatment in western Placer County is currently provided at facilities in Lincoln and Roseville. Both cities are constructing new treatment facilities. As previously stated, it is likely that Placer Ranch has feasible options of being served by either the cities of Lincoln or Roseville, whereas De La Salles's sewerage options appear to be more limited and directed towards the City of Roseville.

The adequacy of the road network will have to be evaluated extensively during the environmental review process, and coordinated with PCTPA , Caltrans and the surrounding Cities. This issue is discussed further in Issue #9. The ability of the County to provide police and fire protection and emergency services will be tied to an economic analysis to insure that these developments generate revenues to cover the costs of providing such services and the cost of providing facilities necessary to delivering the services.

In terms of infrastructure development, the most significant concern is the availability of surface water to serve these projects. PCWA has indicated that there is enough water available to serve projects that are consistent with the County and Cities' General Plans. Both projects would generate substantial urban growth beyond what is planned in the County and Cities' General Plans.

Question #5 - Is the Board willing to consider modifying General Plan policies which require that new development be served with surface water?

Alt. 1 - Yes, it should be possible to explore alternatives to the surface water only policy and those alternatives then evaluated as a part of the project review process and the General Plan amended appropriately or,

Alt. 2 - No, the intent of this policy is to preserve groundwater to counter the historic trend of lowering the groundwater table in order to maintain groundwater quality and to insure that groundwater is available for agricultural uses and during emergencies when the supplies may be interrupted or,

Alt. 3 - Yes, although groundwater use should be considered only as an interim supply until a permanent surface water supply can be delivered to the project.

ISSUE #5 - PRESERVATION OF INDUSTRIALLY ZONED LAND/SUNSET INDUSTRIAL AREA PLAN POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The Placer Ranch project is entirely within the Sunset Industrial Area (SIA). The primary goal of the SIA Plan is to improve the opportunities for industrial and other employment based development in the SIA in order to attract new industries, retain existing industries, to allow existing industries to expand, and to provide the necessary public and private sector services and facilities for all area employers, businesses and patrons.

The SIA is explicit about protecting existing and future industrial development from residential encroachment.

The Placer Ranch proposal differs from this policy direction by converting a large segment of the Sunset Industrial Plan Industrial Area to a variety of uses including business park, industrial park, office professional, multi-family residential, single-family residential, and commercial uses. At present, the Sunset Industrial Area includes a future expansion area and agricultural lands to the west. Over the long term, this current arrangement allows for future expansion to the west if demand exists at some point in time. The proposed Placer Ranch project would eliminate this option.

Question #6 - Given the recent and proposed residential growth within the Cities of Rocklin, Roseville, and Lincoln and proposed residential projects, including the West Roseville Specific Plan and Placer Vineyards, would it be appropriate to consider a General Plan amendment that will convert Industrial Reserve land to residential and other uses?

Alt. 1 - No, the current lands designated for residential development in very close proximity to the Placer Ranch proposal will supply adequate housing for the area. It is unnecessary to convert industrial land to residential uses. The proponents should eliminate residential uses, other than on-campus housing, to provide greater consistency with the Sunset Industrial Area Plan.

Alt. 2 - Yes, the County will consider such an amendment because the remaining amount of industrial land is adequate to allow industrial expansion for many years.

Question #7 - Should the amount of industrial land converted be dependent upon a showing that the future overall County fiscal balance is not adversely affected?

Alt. 1 - Yes, it must be demonstrated that the long-term future fiscal health of the County is maintained, and that the loss of future options for industrial development in this area do not offset this balance or,

Alt. 2 - No, such a demonstration is not required because other areas could be designated for future industrial uses if the fiscal impact of this proposal, due to the loss of future industrial uses, is negative.

ISSUE #6 - PRESERVATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND - There are numerous General Plan goals and policies that call for the preservation of agriculturally zoned lands and agricultural uses as well as the preservation of a viable agricultural segment of the economy in Placer County. Placer County policies support conservation of agricultural land to serve as wildlife habitat and working visual open space that is integral to the rural quality of life that makes this area a unique and desirable place to live.

Both projects are outside areas designated for urban uses except for a portion of the Placer Ranch site which is designated for future industrial uses. The Placer Ranch site is primarily designated Agricultural and 640 acres are encumbered by a Williamson Act Preserve contract. Placer Ranch property owners filed a Notice of Non-Renewal in November 2002 to enter into a 10-year phase-out to remove the land from the contract. Both State Law and the Placer County Administrative Rules allow the Board of Supervisors to cancel a contract only under extraordinary circumstances.

The De La Salle University site is entirely designated for agricultural use and a large portion is currently planted in rice. With the westward expansion of development with the Placer Vineyards, West Roseville Specific Plan, De La Salle and Placer Ranch projects, intervening agricultural lands would also be impacted and likely considered for conversion to urban uses (the City of Roseville's discussion of the balance of the MOU area in the WRSP EIR addresses this point and provides an example of this trend). Even without amending the General Plan or expanding any City sphere of influence, substantial loss of agricultural land is anticipated.

The Placer County Agricultural Commissioner has stated that there are just so many acres left that are suitable for agricultural production and once they are developed, they are gone forever. The Agricultural Commissioner has further opined that if the extent of development approaches that being considered by the projects discussed in this report the future of agriculture in Placer County will be severely threatened. If the two large projects, which convert agricultural land to urban uses, are to move forward through the environmental/development review process, some permanent protection of surrounding lands will be essential if agriculture is to continue to be viable in Placer County.

Question #8 - Given the current adopted goals and policies of the General Plan calling for conservation of agriculturally designated land, is it appropriate for the County to consider these two large scale General Plan amendments on agricultural lands?

Alt. 1 - Yes, but only if the projects assist in the establishment of permanent urban boundaries adjacent to the developments beyond which agricultural lands would be permanently protected. or,

Alt. 2 - Yes, measures to address the loss of agricultural land such as on-site buffers and easements over other strategically located agricultural lands could be required of project proponents should the projects be approved or,

Alt. 3 - No, the cumulative loss of agricultural lands, and resultant change in the character of the County and the quality of life, is of such importance that these agricultural areas should not be converted to urban uses or,

Alt. 4 - The extent of conversion that would result directly from these projects, in addition to the anticipated secondary effects on adjoining agricultural lands could be minimized if the projects were redesigned to reduce the effects on agricultural lands.

ISSUE #7 - BUFFERS BETWEEN INCOMPATIBLE LAND USES - The General Plan includes many policies that call for appropriate buffers between incompatible land uses. Buffers between agricultural and non-agricultural uses range from 100 to 800 feet, depending on the agricultural pursuit and the project-specific characteristics. The Plan also calls for buffers between industrial uses and residential uses.

The General Plan also requires that landfills be buffered from incompatible development. In order to protect the landfill from incompatible encroachment, new residential land uses are to be separated from the property lines of active and future landfill sites by a buffer of one mile. In addition to the one-mile buffer for residential uses, Table I-5 of the PCGP shows a minimum buffer between solid waste disposal sites and commercial sites of 1,000 feet and a minimum buffer between solid waste disposal sites and recreation of 500 feet.

The De La Salle University and Placer Ranch sites are located on, and surrounded by, or adjoin agriculturally zoned property. Therefore, they will not only convert agricultural land to non-agricultural uses, they are likely to encroach into the agricultural buffers described in the General Plan as they are currently proposed.

The Placer Ranch site is located directly south of the Western Regional Sanitary Landfill operation and future expansion area. Residential uses are proposed within the one-mile buffer of the Landfill and expansion area. In addition, the CSUS campus is proposed approximately 2000 feet from the Landfill property and commercial sites are proposed well within the 1000' buffer. There are no specialized setbacks that apply to college campuses, but this use would appear to be fairly noise and nuisance sensitive.

Question #9. If the two proposals are to proceed forward through the environmental review process, should the full agricultural and industrial buffer requirements as prescribed in the General Plan be applied?

Alt. 1 - Yes, where these projects propose development adjacent to areas that are likely to be permanently protected as agricultural lands, or propose industrial uses adjacent to residential areas, the buffer requirements should be applied or,

Alt. 2 - No, buffers should be considered between development and agricultural uses, however because additional development is likely in certain adjoining areas, the strict standards of the General Plan need not apply or,

Alt. 3 - Yes, buffering of incompatible land uses should be required, however, land use proposals that create a logical transition and/or include workable performance standards will be preferable to existing standards. In fact, setbacks greater than those specified in the General Plan may be necessary to provide meaningful and effective separation.

Question #10 - Should the County require adherence to the one-mile buffer between the property lines of the landfill and expansion area and any residential uses?

Alt. 1 - Yes, the landfill is an invaluable resource for the South Placer region that would be extremely difficult and costly to replace, nothing should be done to jeopardize its continued operation or the foreshortening of its useful capacity or,

Alt. 2 - Not necessarily, an alternative form of buffering and/or a different standard should be explored and considered as a part of the project review or,

Alt. 3 - Yes, however it may be possible to buffer on-campus housing without requiring that it be located at least one mile away from the landfill property.

Question # 11 - Should the County consider a redesign of the project to locate the campus and any related housing as far from the landfill (and industrial uses) as feasible (to the west) to eliminate potential conflicts?

Alt. 1 - Yes, because of the sensitivity of campus activities including classrooms and outdoor uses to incompatible uses, particularly noise, odor, and dust, the campus should be relocated as far to the west as feasible or,

Alt 2. - No, campus activities can be protected from incompatible uses with buffering of other land uses, transportation facilities, landscaping and other techniques that must be considered with the project proposal.

ISSUE #8 - CONSERVATION STRATEGY/HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

The staff is working with a number of resource agencies on the development of a NCCP/HCP to address impacts associated with endangered species and their associated habitat. The staff has prepared an analysis, called the NCCP/HCP Draft Conservation Strategy Overview, that was released in mid-September. The draft identifies some of the anticipated impacts associated with growth on a number of endangered species and a range of alternative conservation and growth scenarios that will be used for further evaluation. The subject projects are incorporated into two of the four growth scenarios.

Question #12 - Should the projects be treated as stand alone projects that will seek individual permits or be required to be incorporated into the unfolding conservation plan and follow the guidance from future documents?

Alt. 1 - Yes, as interim projects (those brought forward before the NCCP/HCP is adopted) the applicants will conduct their negotiations with the resource agencies independent of the development of the NCCP/HCP. The County would then evaluate the integrity of the NCCP/HCP as a consequence of the permitting actions of the resource agencies. The Conservation Strategy would need to be amended and in a worse case scenario, these permitting actions could affect the successful outcome of the NCCP/HCP or,

Alt. 2 - No, the projects would not proceed to a final action until such time that the Conservation Strategy was prepared. The Conservation Strategy would be prepared in consultation with the project proponents with the intent of developing a Conservation Strategy that incorporates the necessary conservation and mitigation measures for the projects.

ISSUE #9 TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING

Transportation planning in the West Placer region has forecast the need for major Transportation improvements in the future. These forecasts rely on the General Plans of the jurisdictions in the region for land use assumptions. Major new land development proposals will result in more traffic and therefore additional improvements. More importantly, the time within which the new facilities are needed will be sooner.

Local roadway systems have typically been funded through traffic mitigation fee programs. Regional facilities are funded through a combination of State, Federal and local sources. A recent analysis has shown that funding for the regional system falls well short of available revenue. The new land development proposals will exacerbate this problem unless they construct significant improvements or contribute funds well in excess of current fee programs.

Question #13 - Should the consideration of major new land development proposals include an analysis of the cost, funding, and schedule for major regional transportation infrastructure projects (e.g. Placer Parkway and Hwy 65)?

Alt. 1 - Yes, such information is critical to the evaluation of the proposed projects in order to understand the effects on the regional transportation system or,

Alt. 2 - No, this information should be generated by PCTPA, SACOG, and/or the County.

Alt. 1 - Yes, this is necessary to meet a number of basic policies of the County relative to infrastructure financing and timing.

Alt. 2 - No, it is unreasonable to expect individual projects to identify funding sources for major regional facilities that should be funded from gas tax and other state and federal revenue sources.